

## Letter to the Security Council on Mission to Sudan

19 May 2006

Dear Ambassador,

On the occasion of the United Nations Security Council's Mission to Sudan, the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security (NGOWG) would like to express its alarm at the worsening situation for civilians in Darfur, Sudan—especially those who have been displaced as a result of continued violence. The NGOWG is gravely concerned by the widespread and systematic use of rape being perpetrated on women and girls.

Gender-based violence, especially sexual violence, is a fundamental protection issue primarily affecting women and girls, which requires systematic consideration by the Security Council. The violence committed against women and girls during conflict is deployed as a strategic weapon of war, a tool to achieve wider objectives such as the spread of terror and intimidation, and breaking the resistance and morale of a community.

Efforts to stem such incidents of gender-based violence are often frustrated in the face of a climate of impunity. The government of Sudan has made many commitments to address such crimes, but to date, has not fully acted on these commitments. As a result, perpetrators still enjoy a climate of absolute impunity.

Violence against women during conflict, and the resulting health and socio-economic consequences for entire communities, remain one of the most persistent obstacles to women's full and equal participation in post-conflict peacebuilding and reconciliation processes, which is recognized in Security Council resolution 1325 as crucial to promoting sustainable peace and security. Accordingly, it is imperative for the Security Council to develop a deeper understanding and capacity to address such violence and respond forcefully and strategically to it. We hope the Council will take the opportunity of this mission to Sudan to earnestly embark on this process.

Women in Sudan have borne the brunt of the conflict and, despite displacement and the challenges of their daily life, have managed to be active in promoting peace and stability. They are active in State Committees to prevent and respond to violence against women and volunteer as unpaid teachers in displaced persons camps, for example. The peace process must allow for women to continue to play leadership roles. Women must also be included in decision-making on how/when to return, the ownership of land and power-sharing.

### **NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security respectfully urges the Security Council to:**

1. Make every effort to ensure that the government of Sudan upholds the rule of law by investigating and prosecuting incidents of sexual violence, and ensuring that all survivors and victims' families are provided with full and meaningful reparations.
2. Ensure that improving the protection of displaced women and girls is a priority. Reports of women and girls being raped during the collection of firewood occur almost daily. This is a problem that can and must be addressed immediately. The NGOWG asks the Council to ensure that national and international security forces provide transportation to firewood collection sites and routinely patrol the routes to them. Fuel-efficient technologies and alternative fuels should be used to lessen the need for firewood. To be most effective, these solutions should be coordinated

by one agency, implemented in consultation with displaced women and coupled with income generation activities.

3. Address the presence, sale and import of arms in Sudan. Even after cease-fire, the presence of weapons leads to the escalation of domestic violence and abuse of women and girls.
4. Ensure that women play an integral role in all levels of the peace process, in accordance with Security Council resolution 1325, and to insist on women's active participation where this is not happening. Sustainable peace requires that women be included in decision-making on return, power-sharing and land distribution.

We also urge the Security Council to meet with key NGOs working in this field. In order to facilitate this, we are attaching contact information for these groups. They can provide firsthand, field level expertise and recommendations that we believe will greatly benefit the Security Council and help promote its work.

For meaningful and effective dialogue to take place, leading representatives from these women's organizations must also be included in joint meetings with United Nations, military, and governmental actors. It is our hope that the Security Council on its mission to Sudan will set this example for others to follow.

Sincerely yours,

Gina Torry, Coordinator

**Signed Members of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security:**

Amnesty International  
Boston Consortium on Gender, Security and Human Rights  
Hague Appeal for Peace  
Femmes Africa Solidarité  
United Methodists Women's Division  
International Alert  
International Women's Tribune Center  
Women's Action for New Directions  
Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children  
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom